

Patterns of Fiction

The following patterns of fiction are not based on any hard-and-fast rules that must be followed during the story-writing process. Think of them more as general approaches to story writing. After reviewing these patterns, you may think of many good ideas for stories.

The Quest (Return) @ In a quest, the main character sets out in search of something, experiences various adventures, and finally returns—either triumphant or wiser. (A freshman sets out to make the basketball team and succeeds against significant odds.)

Sample Stories

"A Worn Path" by Eudora Welty

"My Kinsman, Major Molineaux" by Nathaniel Hawthorne
(Any of the heroic myths)

The Initiation @ A main character (usually a young person) is faced with a new situation that tests his or her abilities or beliefs. How the character deals with the situation determines the direction of his or her life. (A young boy loses a dog that he worships, and learns something about life in the process.)

Sample Stories

"The Haunted Boy" by Carson McCullers

"Marigolds" by Eugenia Collier

"a list of ten things" by Loubel Cruz (See page 170.)

The Union @ In this pattern, a boy and girl grow fond of each other, but their parents or some other authority figure or circumstance comes between them. The couple usually gets together in the end after overcoming various obstacles. (A teenage boy and the teenage daughter of a migrant worker meet secretly in spite of their parents' objections.)

Sample Stories

"Hoods I Have Known" by Sondra Spatt

"Horsetrader's Daughter" by D. H. Lawrence
(Any romantic stories)

The Choice @ The main character is faced with a difficult decision near the end of this type of story. Making this decision is the high point of the plot. (An out-of-work laborer must decide if he should work for someone he dislikes.)

Sample Stories

"A & P" by John Updike

"The Bass, The River, and Sheila Mant" by W.D. Wetherell
"When the Bough Breaks" by Elizabeth Enright